

# POINT OF VIEW

By EARL REED SILVERS.

For three years Jim Higgins and Mary Foster had lived on opposite sides of California street. Occasionally Jim had seen Mary make her leisurely way down the high front porch and depart with tossing head for "The Avenue." Mary appeared to him to be rather stuck up; she had a way of carrying her head as if she were afraid it might fall off her rather thin neck if she inclined it the least bit forward, and once or twice Jim had found those rather large blue eyes of hers looking straight through him, as if he had been nothing more than a piece of wood leaning against the fence post. Looking at Mary from the viewpoint of a stranger, Jim decided that she was just the kind of a girl he didn't want to know.

Jim was twenty-four years old, and he made \$24 a week, and gave than one blooming maiden had looked at him with rather covetous eyes. But Jim considered himself girl-proof.

Yet on the evening of the annual outing of the Republican club Jim was destined to meet his fate. The day had passed along rather uneventfully; he had managed to secure a good seat on the trip to the island, and having once reached the boat landing he had hastened to the bench and had spent the entire day in a bathing suit. But when the big excursion boat started on its return trip Jim began to feel the stirrings of vain misgivings.

A big silver moon hung over the water, a faint breeze rippled through the waving hair of three girls sitting near him, and from the shadows came the sound of soft voices. For a time Jim sat in the bow of the boat with his bachelor friends and tried to persuade himself that his pipe was all that he needed to make the evening a perfect one. But his honest heart told him that he was deceiving himself, that what he wanted was a girl with laughing eyes and a jest or two on her lips. He arose restlessly and started to walk toward the stern. In every conceivable nook he could glimpse dark figures, sitting surprisingly close and making surprisingly little noise. They awoke in Jim vague memories of other nights when he, too, had sat in the shadows.

But suddenly, from a little nook at the end of one of the small passageways, came the sound of a sob. Jim stood still and listened. It came again, a girl's sob, expressing misery such as only youth can know. Jim turned and made his way into the shadows, finding in the very farthest corner of the niche the huddled figure of a girl. There was something vaguely familiar about her, and Jim hesitated a moment before addressing her. But another stifled sob caused him to touch her lightly on the shoulder. "Is there anything I can do?" he asked.

The girl raised her head and turned a tear-stained face toward him. And then Jim received a shock. It was Mary Foster. Gone was the proud toss of her head, gone the supercilious stare of her big blue eyes. She looked very much like a helpless child, and Jim's heart went out to her.

"I'm Jim Higgins," he announced. "Ain't there something I can do?" Mary's eyes opened just a little wider.

"Are you the boy across the street?" she asked.

Jim's heart leaped just a bit at her words. He had had no idea that she knew him from Adam.

"Yes," he said, "I live across the street. Now tell me what's the matter?"

The girl half turned on the straight-backed chair and wiped her eyes.

"Nothing very much," she answered. "I came to the outing with Jerry Lyons and he wanted me to come here and talk with him, and I wouldn't, and so he went away."

"And you want me to get him again?"

A hint of the Mary Foster of old was manifested in the girl's sudden change of manner.

"No, I wouldn't have him back for a hundred dollars," she exclaimed. "I never want to see him again."

"Then how are you going to get home?" Mary looked at Jim helplessly.

"I don't know."

Jim exercised his prerogative as one of the stronger sex.

"I know how you're going to get home," he announced. "I'm going to take you."

Mary's hand grasped his arm impulsively. "Oh, do you mind?"

"I should say I didn't mind." Jim's whole body thrilled at that trusting clasp of Mary's hand. "Supposing we take a walk."

The girl hesitated.

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